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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

GENETIC STUDY OF HEBREW TRADITION¹

This series of Schweich Lectures suffers from the costs of war in that it lacks the excellent photographs by which the series was illustrated when originally delivered. No better lecturer could have been chosen for this subject than Dr. King, not only by reason of his unimpeachable scholarship in Babylonian and Sumerian, but also because of the fact that he had previously prepared the standard edition of the Babylonian Creation Tablets. It goes without saying that his treatment of the Babylonian and Sumerian materials will be all that such scholarship should lead us to expect.

The warrant for taking up again this much belabored subject of the relations between Hebrew traditions on the one hand and those of Babylon and Egypt on the other was found in the fact that during the last few years there have been published certain Sumerian documents which bring new material to light. These tablets are a part of the finds of the University of Pennsylvania excavators at Nippur, one of the most ancient of Babylonian cities, and they yield us the earliest known versions of the Deluge and Creation stories and some dynastic lists going back to prehistoric times.

Of the matters of interest made certain by the new materials and brought out by Dr. King in these three lectures, we mention but a few. The lists of antediluvian kings and cities given by Berossus are found to have been based upon Sumerian prototypes and not to have been the product of the free invention of later days. Furthermore these Sumerian traditions apparently did not reach Greece by way of the Hebrews, for the Greek form of the traditions shows some points of closer contact with the original Sumerian than does the Hebrew. The Hebrew traditions themselves go back to early Sumerian originals but also show the influence of the later Babylonian editions, making it clear that the Hebrews received these traditions at the hands of the Babylonians, among whom the original Sumerian forms were carefully preserved. The time of

¹ *Legends of Babylon and Egypt in Relation to Hebrew Tradition*. [The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy for 1916.] By L. W. King. London: Oxford University Press, 1918. ix+155 pages. 3s.

this borrowing Dr. King does not fix definitely, herein showing praise-worthy caution, but makes the beginning of the process contemporary with the Hebrew entrance into Canaan. The Creation myth and the Flood myth go back to ancient Sumerian originals which arose in Babylonia, the Flood story in particular resting upon a probable basis of fact, at least so far as conditions in the Euphrates Valley would occasion such a tale.

Dr. King definitely pronounces against the astrological explanations of these things so confidently propounded by German scholarship. He likewise expresses his judgment as unfavorable to the claim recently put forth by Dr. Langdon to the discovery of another new Deluge story in the Nippur tablets. Thus Sayce, Prince, Jastrow, Peters, Barton, and King all deny the Deluge character of the tablet in question, and Dr. Langdon is now said to agree with them. The same sort of confidence cannot be placed in Dr. King's refusal to make the Mosaic Law dependent at all upon the Code of Hammurabi. The points of contact between the latter and the Covenant Code are so numerous and so definite that it seems hardly possible to escape the hypothesis of dependence. These similarities are far less satisfactorily accounted for on the basis of the general likeness of all Semitic social institutions and practices. C. H. W. Johns, in a previous series of Schweich Lectures dealing with *The Relations between the Laws of Babylonia and the Laws of the Hebrew Peoples* (1914), has made it practically certain that the Hebrew lawmakers were familiar with Hammurabi's legislation and made use of it.

We lay down this series of lectures realizing that we shall come back to it again and again for the information which it so lavishly offers, and we are grateful that it keeps the Schweich Lectures upon that high level of scholarly popularization which characterized it at the start, but has not been consistently maintained.

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UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

A NEW ARABIC TEXTBOOK¹

This volume is one of the best, if not the best, published for the use of missionaries, officials, and business men desiring a concise but sufficiently elaborated text, and thoroughly reliable for acquiring a

¹ *Arabic Simplified*. By 'Abdul Fady (Arthur T. Upson, superintendent of the Nile Mission Press, Cairo, Egypt). Published by the author at Cairo, Egypt. 470 pages.